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GENDER SENSITIVE POLICIES: ARE THERE ANY CHANGES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA FROM 1990 TO 2011?

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Abstract

One of the fundamental values of the constitutional order in the Republic of Macedonia is the principle of equality which guarantees the equal rights regardless of the gender. The recognition and the promotion of the gender equal opportunities are a necessary precondition for democratic development. In the past 24 years of the independence, the political parties in the Republic of Macedonia passed through various stages and changes, which include the attitudes of the parties towards women issues. This paper will research the capacity of the main political parties in the Macedonian bloc, SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE, to develop, adopt and implement gender sensitive policies. The research will be based on the analysis of the election programs regarding the Parliamentary elections in 1990, 2002 and 2011. The analysis will cover the development of the gender sensitivity in the election programs of SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE for the period of two decades.

Key words: political party; SDSM; VMRO-DPMNE; election program; equal opportunities; gender sensitive policies

INTRODUCTION

Political organizations are “forms of organized unions of citizens and groups established for the expression of their mutual interests and their requirements towards centers of the political decisions” (Vankovska 2007, 32). The most important political organization is the political party. The political party presents a social group that unites people in an organized and voluntary manner and in accordance with a certain ideology transformed into a party program, in order to win the government or to make impact. Political parties connect the citizens and the government, and also enable the citizens to participate in the governing and to make impact. The political parties “communicate with the citizens during the elections through the election programs. These programs emphasize the values, the aims, the world views, the principles etc.” (Milardovik 1996, 73). They are starting point of the party legitimacy, because if the party wins the elections and becomes the governing one, those programs will become reality through the decision making processes. The election programs as a “written document represent systematized, complete and theoretical approach to the issues that cover strategic, operative and current activities, relevant for the existence and the development of the country, as well as the welfare of the citizens” (Lazarevski 1994, 105).

With the election programs, political parties participate in the elections, and for that reason these programs contain the views and the attitudes of the parties for the current political issues. Generally, they are “strategically written – considering the current problems and questions of the political agenda in a particular country and in a particular election process, from the government position or the opposition” (Gabel and Huber 2000, 100). One of the fundamental values of the constitution in the Republic of Macedonia is the principle of equality, which guarantees equal rights regardless of the gender. The existence of the provisions regarding the gender equality in the Constitution shows the will of the political parties in the Republic of Macedonia to place the country in the company among the other democratic countries that recognized and promoted the equal opportunities as a necessary precondition for democratic development. According to the Article 2 from the Law on political parties in the Republic of Macedonia, a political party is a “voluntary organization of citizens, formed for realization and protection of the political, the economic, the social, the cultural and the other rights and beliefs, as well as for participating in the decision making process” (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 76/04, 2004). The same law regulates the equal gender participation in the party, so the political parties in their work must take care about the realization of the principle of gender equality in the availability of the functions in the political party.

In the last 24 years of independence in the Republic of Macedonia, the political parties were going through different stages and changes that covered their position towards women issues. This paper will research the capacity of the main political parties of the Macedonian block, Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (known as SDSM) and Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (known as VMRO-DPMNE) to develop, adopt and implement gender sensitive policies and measures. This research will be based on the analysis of the election programs of the parties regarding the first independent, parliamentary elections in 1990 and their election programs regarding the parliamentary elections in 2002 and in 2011. The analysis will cover the development of the gender sensitivity in the election programs of SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE for the period of two decades. The research will also show what kind of gender policies are proposed in these programs. According to the UNDP gender analysis, prepared for their gender in development program (United Nations Development Programme 2001, 62), the gender policies can be separated in four categories depending on the level of recognizing and addressing the gender issues. These categories are:

- Gender neutral policies – policies that aspire to involve certain groups of men and women in order to meet specific goals, but the resources, the responsibilities and the opportunities stay intact. Gender neutral policies do not disturb existing gender relations and do not change the structural status quo;
- Gender specific policies - policies that use the knowledge of gender differences in a given situation to respond to the practical gender needs of either women or men. These policies do not address the existing division of resources and responsibilities, but they usually have major impact, because of the targeting the specific gender.
- Gender transformative policies - policies which target either men or women (or both genders) and at the same time recognize the existence of the genderspecific needs and limitations. Their aim is to transform the existing distribution of resources and responsibilities in order to create a more equal relationship between women and men. Gender redistribution is the biggest challenge of all interventions because it is

not focused only on providing the resources to the women in the existing social framework, but also on reassessing the existing status quo (Center for Research and Policy making 2010, 7)

- Gender sensitive policies - policies which in the political processes of planning and decision making incorporate the perceptions, the experiences, the knowledge and the interests of the women and the men. At the same time, these policies integrate the gender perspective. The process of “gender mainstreaming placed the gender equality in the center of the decision making process, the medium plans, the programs, the budget, the institutional structures and the procedures” (Dokmanovic 2002, 18).

This analysis will show what type of gender policies were used in the election programs of SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE in the period of two decades. For this purpose, the following questions will be examined: Does the program contain the position of the party towards the women and their current role in the society?; Is there a part of the program that covered gender equality and / or discrimination?; Which part of the election program is dedicated to the women and / or addresses the issues that affect their lives?; How the election program addresses the issues related to the quality of women’s life and women’s human rights (for example the education, the employment, the fertility, the population policy, the demography, the status of the single parents, the health care, the social welfare, the family, the abortion rights, etc.)?; Does the election program represent the party position toward the representation of the women in the decision making process?; Does the election program offer a vision of the role of the women in the society for the future and what is it?; Does the election program offer specific measures and solutions to improve the position of women in the society? Finally, the analysis will show if the main political parties of the Macedonian bloc have the capacity to offer gender sensitive measures and policies and to actively participate in the achieving of the gender equality in the Republic of Macedonia.

Election programs of SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE for the elections in 1990

The election programs of the first parliamentary elections in the Republic of Macedonia of SDSM (in that time known as SKM-PDP) and VMRO-DPMNE are primarily determinate from the historical moment of the country. For that reason, the biggest part of these programs was dedicated to the questions related to the transformation of the old socialist system, the relations towards Yugoslavia, the neighbors, the national question etc. The election programs of both political parties are not available on line. Therefore, for the purposes of this paper, the hard copy of the book named “The Elections ’90 - Political parties in Macedonia (Electoral programs, electoral laws, candidates by electoral units) by the authors Timovski and Stefanovski will be used.

The League of Communists of Macedonia - Party for Democratic Change (SKM-PDP)

The election program of the political party League of Communists of Macedonia - Party for Democratic Change (SKM-PDP), today known as SDSM, is presented on 27 pages and it can be divided in an introductory part and four bigger parts. The introductory

part of this election program doesn't have a gender dimension. This part covered human rights and freedoms, as well as the international, religious and cultural tolerance, but the gender equality is not even mention in this part of the election program.

The first part of this election program covered the basic values promoted by SKM-PDP: the freedom, the rights and the solidarity. In the part that covered justice, SKM-PDP promoted equal life opportunities for the people and equality before the law (Timovski and Stefanovski 1990, 7), but unfortunately they did not mention the gender equality. Speaking about the openness towards all people, this party states that they are the party of all people who accept their program, regardless of the class-social, the ethnicity and the religious beliefs (Timovski and Stefanovski 1990, 8). SKM-PDP represent themselves as a political party completely open to the opinions and the initiatives of the young people, without showing their openness to different opinions, needs, attitudes and initiatives of the women. In the part of the election program named "We continue traditions of the *Krushevo Manifesto* and the decisions of ASNOM" - SKM-PDP highlight that Macedonia will strengthen as a country of equal citizens (Timovski and Stefanovski 1990, 9). As indicated in this part, SKM-PDP at this moment understands the equality only as the ethnic and the national diversity of the citizens. They do not mention the gender diversity as a part of the people's equality. The part named "International, religious and cultural tolerance and respect – condition for stable relations in Macedonia", stated in the same manner: "(...) our goals are: equality of the citizens before the law/without national and religious discriminations (...)" (Timovski and Stefanovski 1990, 13). Once again the gender equality is not mentioned as a goal of this party.

The gender equality is highlighted only once in this election program in the part named "Let's become a free, social and culturally integrated human society" where SKM – PDP emphasize that they will create a society in which the social gender equality will be guaranteed. Also they will create the material, the educational and the cultural conditions for the realization of the constitutional provision regarding gender equality (Timovski and Stefanovski 1990, 14). The part of the program that covered the economic and the social questions is focused on the creation of the requisites for the free market, the reform of the public finance system, the investment policies, the new employment opportunities, etc. The measures that SKM-PDP predicts in this part are gender neutral because they do not cover additional stimulations, education and further qualifications for the women in order to include them in the new economic system. The part of the election program named "Social peace and economic prosperity of Macedonia requires socially controlled demographic growth of the population" predicts discriminatory measures that will control the natural right of the reproduction. According to SKM-PDP, the rate of natural increase in Macedonia must be in accordance with the social and the economic opportunities. Otherwise, the social peace, the economic prosperity, the personal standard and the security will not exist. SKM-PDP highlight that they will protect the natural law for reproduction, in accordance with the possibilities for providing the worthy living and working conditions for the people (Timovski and Stefanovski 1990, 25).

The third part of the election program covers the culture, the education and the science. In this part, SKM-PDP highlight that they will stands for Macedonia as a country of multiculturalism in which the creative freedom of the youth will be respected and stimulated. According to this party, they will invest in the science and the education of the citizens, by stimulating the best staff and the specialists in the particular areas.

Unfortunately, this part of the election program does not provide specific stimulations and investments in the capacity building of the women, in order to be better established in the cultural, the educational and the scientific sphere.

In the part of the program that covers Macedonia and the European integration, the focus is on the question how to get closer to the EU by ensuring the civil rights and freedoms that are common in the developed countries (Timovski and Stefanovski 1990, 31). This part does not include the role of the women or the necessity for achieving the gender equality in the process of EU integration.

This election program ends with the declaration of the human rights in which only one from the eleven commitments for the Macedonian citizens is about the women. Only in the commitment number three, in one sentence it is noticed that: “all the people are equal before the law regardless of the national, the religious, the class and the gender identity” (Timovski and Stefanovski 1990, 34).

From the above mentioned it can be concluded that for the first independent parliamentary elections in 1990, SKM-PDP (today SDSM) had the election program that is not gender sensitive at all. The program does not state the position of the party towards the woman and their role in the society. In this program, the gender equality is mentioned only once in the section named “To become free, social and cultural human community” (Timovski and Stefanovski 1990, 14).

VMRO-DPMNE

The election program of the political party VMRO-DPMNE is presented on 14 pages and a major part of the program is dedicated to the current historical moment, as well as the status of the Macedonian country. The introductory part and the most of the parts of this program are gender neutral and VMRO-DPMNE addresses “The Citizens of Macedonia”. In this program, VMRO-DPMNE highlight that the best political system for Macedonia is the parliamentary democracy where the citizens will have all the human rights and freedoms. In this part, the commitment for gender equality is mentioned under the number seven (Timovski and Stefanovski 1990, 136), after the freedom of association, the freedom of speech and press, the freedom of religious beliefs, the right of private property etc.

This party stands for the European integration without mediation, through changes in the political system, the legislature, the economy and the science (Timovski and Stefanovski 1990, 137). The achieving of the gender equality, as a precondition for the European integration is not mentioned at all in this part of the program.

In the part of the program that covers the economic issues, VMRO-DPMNE highlight the sovereign Macedonian economy, the market economy and the privatization of the public property, the development of the small market etc. In their priorities, the party does not mention whether and how will it work on the stimulation, the education and the further qualification of the women, in order to ease their access to the proposed economic, scientific and technological development. VMRO-DPMNE predicts a new system of social welfare based on the principles of the free and equal chances for all people, as well as the justice and the inter-human solidarity (Timovski and Stefanovski 1990, 145). Once again, this party excludes the gender equality as an important segment in the development of the welfare state. The parts of this program that cover the education and the culture also do not

include the women and their role in these social areas. The program of this party ends with the part named “Part of the VMRO–DPMNE’s program is already realized”. This part, as well as the whole election program refers only to the statehood, the awareness and the strengthening of the national feelings, and the commitments for sovereign and independent Macedonian state in confederative Yugoslavia.

From the above mentioned, it can be concluded that VMRO-DPMNE’s election program presented on the first independent parliamentary elections in 1990 is not gender sensitive as well. This program does not state the position of the party towards the woman and their role in society. The gender equality is mentioned only in the part of the election program named “VMRO-DPMNE will fight against any totalitarian rule in the Macedonian state” (Timovski and Stefanovski 1990, 136), under the number seven.

The general conclusion about the Parliamentary elections in 1990 is that both political parties, SKM-PDP and VMRO-DPMNE, in their election programs usually offer gender neutral policies that did not change the status quo position. These political parties did not care about the incorporation of the perceptions, the experiences, the knowledge and the interests of both women and men in the planning and decision making process. For that reason we can conclude that their policies in that period are gender insensitive.

Election programs of SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE for the elections in 2002

In order to better understand the positive changes that are happening in the political landscape in the Republic of Macedonia in this period, we should keep in mind the tendencies of the Republic of Macedonia towards the European Union. The European integration process implies changes and harmonization of the Macedonian legislature in coordination with the EU law. For that reason, the awareness about the need for gender equality is constantly rising, as well as the promotion and the protection of the women’s human rights in every area of the social life.

Affected by the Stability pact and the Gender task force, on 1 March 2000, the Macedonian Women's Lobby (MWL) is formed as a group to apply pressure to the institutions. MWL unites women from different profiles as representatives from the non-governmental sector, different political parties, syndicates, media, Government, Parliament, local self-government, as well as women experts in different areas. The activities of this lobby have positive influence on the awareness raising of the women, members of the political parties. They become aware that at first and foremost they need to win the battle in their own party in order to introduce the positive discrimination and the quota for gender equality representation in the structures of the parties. This is the only way for the women to come up to the position to fight for the equal opportunities.

SDSM is the first political party that in 2003 introduced mandatory quota of 30% in their statute and in all the organs of the party. This happened a year before adoption of a new Law on political parties published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, no. 76/2004. This law, in the article four regulates that: “The political parties in their work should take care about the realization of the gender equality principle in the availability of the functions in the political party“. The Macedonian women's lobby, by using the influence of their members, also obtains a separate paragraph in the new Law on election of representatives, published in the Official gazette of the Republic of Macedonia,

no. 42/2002, article 37, paragraph 3. This paragraph regulates that “in the proposed list of the candidates, each gender will be present with at least 30%”.

SDSM

The election program of SDSM for the Parliamentary elections in 2002 is available on line. The program consists of 62 pages separated in an introduction and 8 parts. In the introduction part, SDSM highlights their primary efforts which are including: the protection and the promotion of human rights and freedoms, as well as the fight for development of free, plural and judicial society that will provide equal opportunities for everybody. This introduction part does not clearly point out the commitment about respecting the gender equality.

The first part of this program is dedicated to the economy and the solution of the unemployment problem through particular economic and structural measures which are not gender sensitive. The program proposed certain reliefs for the employers if they hire a certain category of people like people with disabilities, but there are not any reliefs provided for the employers if they want to hire more women. This part also predicts financing of trainings for an additional qualification of the employees, but without any special or other stimulation for the women.

In the part of the program which is dedicated to education, science and culture, there are 18 strategic goals and none of them is about the positive stimulation of women for active inclusion in the educational process. Only the goal number two guarantees some equality such as “equal chances for entrance in the educational system and the realization of one of the basic human rights” (Election program SDSM. 2002). The changes that are predicted in this program do not cover particular stimulations for additional education and qualification of women in order to increase their number and their part in the culture, the education and the science.

In the part of the election program, which covers the social politics and the national program of SDSM regarding the fight against poverty, as their primary value SDSM highlights the social justice i.e. the creation of equal opportunities for citizens through the education, the employment and the social welfare? In their fight against poverty, SDSM does not target the women as a separate vulnerably category, although “the data from the UN say that women primarily are poorer than men because they do not own any land, but they work on it; they do not possess capital, but work more for less money, especially having in mind the free labor, which in the world history is identified with slavery work” (Slapsak 2003, 312). The separate fragment in the part about social politics is the part named “Family in the spotlight”, which presents the family as a marital union, parental union, social union and institution. The program that predicts improvement in the economic and the social status of the family does not mention the role of the woman as a wife and a mother at any point. We can notice that this part of the political program is gender neutral because it refers to the members of the family in general and the single parents. Some of these points refer to children, as well as the old people, but there is not a point that separately refers to women as part of the family.

The part named “Health care” predicts social democratic measures that will provide health care on the principle of the equal rights for all citizens (Election program SDSM. 2002). For that purpose, this political party proposes tax exemption in the basic package of the health care for several categories of people, among which are also women in

the pregnancy. This measure can be considered as gender specific policy because it is designed for women in order to satisfy their specific needs more effectively.

In the part dedicated to the political system, SDSM offer their vision about fair and democratic elections, government that will cost less, protection of the human and majority rights; respect for the rule of law; modern and non-party administration; decentralized and modernized local self-governance; independent judicial system; effective fight against corruption; freedom of media; freedom of religion and separation of the church from the state; support for non-governmental organizations for development of the civil society, etc. Unfortunately, all these politics are gender neutral because they are about the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia. There are no specific measures for women or their role in the parts of the political system mentioned above.

In the part that covered political system, SDSM predicts “Gender equality” as its basic postulate. In this part SDSM states that they are the first party in the Republic of Macedonia that stands for achievement of the real gender equality and introduction of the so-called positive discrimination as a method for better representation of the women in politics. This party reviews the principles for gender equality through the realization of the women rights as an integral part of the human rights; equal opportunities for men and women; equal access and possibilities for employment; elimination of the all forms of violence against women; providing opportunities for the women to be in a decision making position (Election program SDSM, 2002). Despite the fact that this part is about gender equality, not a single word is written about equal allocation of the resources, the responsibilities, the opportunities, or about changing the position of women in the society.

After the analysis of the election program of SDSM, for the Parliamentary elections in 2002 we can conclude the following: There is greater gender sensitivity in this program than in the program which they have offered in the first independent elections in 1991. However, this comes more as a result of the tendencies of the Republic of Macedonia to the EU, which require changes to the Macedonian law and its harmonization with the EU law, rather than as a result of changes in the awareness, the attitudes and the priorities of the party. Their commitment to the gender equality in this period is mostly declarative. This can be seen from the fact that SDSM believes that commitment to equality and respecting the fundamental human rights automatically include the gender equality, as well. As a result of that, this party does not mention the gender equality separately in their election program. The position of the party towards women and their role in society can be seen best through the part devoted to the political system, where the gender equality is listed in the last chapter.

VMRO-DPMNE

The election program of VMRO-DPMNE for the Parliamentary elections in 2002 is not available on line. Despite the author’s efforts and demands addressed directly to the party, this election program was not provided. Therefore, for the purposes of this paper the research “Women in politics - Gender analyzes of the programs of political parties” conducted in 2002 from the women's civil initiative *Antiko* will be used. This research covers the opinion of the parties related to gender issues. According to the research, VMRO-DPMNE highlights that the gender equality is enumerate among the basic values of the party and the party supports gender equality through the building of partnership. For

VMRO – DPMNE, the treatment of the women as members of the opposite sex and second-class citizens is unacceptable. They also state that it is necessary for the women to have equal treatment with maximum respect of their freedoms and rights. According to them, disrespecting the equality between women and men leads to violation of the human rights. VMRO-DPMNE highlights that the gender equality is listed as one of the basic commitments of this party and one paragraph of the program for the Parliamentary elections in 2002 is dedicated to the gender equality. In the rest of the program, women's issues are covered indirectly. This party supports women's active participation in political and public life and decision making processes. They also stand for protection of women from domestic violence, as well as protection from abuse, coercion and torture of the husbands (Antiko 2002, 10). In this election program, the rapid population growth of the certain entities, VMRO-DPMNE treats as a gender issue. Therefore, they consider that an adequate population policy is required. The protection of the family as the base of the community is one of the basic values for this party. In this program they proposed new system of social care which will be guaranteed by a new family legislature. According to VMRO-DPMNE, the violation of the women's rights and the enabling of the gender inequality are opposed to the civil values of the European countries, and their approval will separate the Republic of Macedonia from the EU standards. This is the reason why the obstacles for women in the state and social hierarchy are unacceptable for this party. From the abovementioned, it can be concluded that in the election program of VMRO –DPMNE for the Parliamentary elections in 2002, the women issues are covered mostly declarative. The party uses various formulations for supporting the gender equality formally, but without specifying concrete measures for successful realization of these efforts. The general conclusion about the Parliamentary elections in 2002 is that SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE have election programs that are more gender sensitive from those that were represented in 1990. Unfortunately, these changes do not come as a result of the changes in attitudes and awareness of the parties, but as the result of the harmonization of the legislation of the Republic of Macedonia with the EU legislation. Therefore, the party programs rather suggest gender neutral than gender specific policies. In this period, according to their election programs, SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE do not recognize the gender specific needs of the women so they do not offer any gender transformative policies.

Election programs of SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE for the elections in 2011

In 2004, women MPs won the battle for the legalization of 30% of the women representation in all the structures of the parties. Within the new Law on political parties from 2004, the Article 4 regulated that the political parties in their action must take care of the achievement of the principle of gender equality in the availability of all positions in the political parties. However, in order to win more seats for the women in the Parliament, the Macedonian Women's Lobby worked hard together with the women MP's to introduce new, better and upgraded provision for the women representation in the Parliament. This was made through the codification of all election laws in a new Election Code. The new provision in the Article 64, paragraph 5 of the Election Code, published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 40 from 31.03.2006, stated that "in the submitted list of the candidates for MPs and candidates for members of the Municipality Council, in every three seats at the list at least one belongs to the under-represented

gender”. Until the Parliamentary elections in 2011 there are not any major changes in the gender sensitization of the political parties, so this elections were held in the political conditions mentioned above.

SDSM

The election program of SDSM for the Parliamentary elections in 2011 is available on line and is consisted of 135 pages separated in 5 parts. In the introductory part, this party addresses the citizens and friends, highlighting the values that they will fight for: freedom, equality and solidarity. The call of the Prime Minister Candidate of this party, Ms. Radmila Sekerinska presented in the introductory part had gender dimension: “therefore, I ask you to review our projects for improving the lives of workers, entrepreneurs, farmers, redundant workers, administration, patients, young, women” (Election program SDSM 2011, 1). For the first time in the introductory part of the election program of this party, women are mentioned as a separate category.

The first part of this program named “Jobs and Living” covered the economic investment and the social policy measures that this party predicts. Unfortunately, the measures that predict easier access to the funds are gender neutral. The goal of the economic policies presented in this program is to preserve the existing and to create new jobs, in order to improve the livelihoods of the citizens. The special measures for achieving these goals are provided, but, unfortunately, all of them are also gender neutral. These measures do not highlight the needs and the possibilities of women as a specific category of employees.

The part named “Labor market” covered the possibilities for new jobs and better job opportunities. In this part, priority is given to the employment policy, especially to the possibilities how to provide jobs that will enable harmonization of the professional and family life (Election program SDSM 2011, 52). This measure has gender sensitive elements and will have direct impact on the professional and family life of the women in the Republic of Macedonia. Also, for the first time, the needs and the opportunities of the women related to their professional life are taken into account in this program.

In this election program, SDSM indicates the financial possibilities of the Republic of Macedonia as an EU candidate country, as well as the policies that can be realized with the support of the EU funds. All of the eight provided policies have indirect impact on the women. These policies predict: development of specific skills among the unemployed, retraining and additional qualification of the unemployed, various trainings and support of the labor mobility. Direct impact on the women has the fourth policy that provides direct financial assistance and support through trainings for reactivating of the young mothers in the labor market. This gender sensitive measure provides support for the young mothers to find an employment. The project will provide financial support for the employers, and the young mothers will be able to use different programs for training and additional qualification in order to strengthen their capacities (Election program SDSM 2011, 53). This measure is also gender specific, because it directly satisfies the specific needs of the women. The part of the program that refers to the inclusion of the vulnerable groups in the labor market includes gender sensitive solutions. These solutions provide subsidization for new employments of the married couples with three or more children, parents of the children with disabilities, single parents and victims of domestic violence. However, besides the sensitivity, these policies are gender neutral because they do not refer to any

gender particularly. The part of the election program that covered fair and well-paid job, also provides gender sensitive measures. For example, SDSM states that they will make gender assessment of the entire labor legislation, with particular dedication on the protection of the women workers (Election program SDSM 2011, 58). Among the other measures, they provide new specific law on mobbing protection and flexible working hours for the employees in the public administration. The explanation for the flexible working hours is the possibility of the employees to spend more time with their children and family in the afternoon. The above mentioned measures are gender neutral, because they refer to both genders, but at the same time they are gender transformative, because they enable and motivate, not only the mothers, but also the fathers that work in the public administration to spend their free time with the family.

In the part of the election program that refers to the social policy, SDSM consider that the state should protect people from the risks as poverty, exploitation, discrimination, unemployment, etc. This party believes that the vulnerable groups and the people that are on the margins of the society must have equal opportunities for their further social inclusion. SDSM predicts social protection for the citizens who are in the position of social risk, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, religion or gender. The above mentioned measures are sensitive, but gender neutral, because they refer to both genders. In the part of the election program that refers to the education, the health and the youth in Macedonia, SDSM notes that “the young people need a modern society without discrimination in any field, a society that will break the existing stereotypes and prejudices and that will respect the diversity” (Election program SDSM 2011, 75). This part covered all levels of education and for all of them special measures is provided. These measures are gender neutral, further and special benefits for education and additional qualifications of the women are not provided. In this manner, the number of women, as well as their participation in the education and the science could not be increased. This part also covered the health care and it provides greater investment in the preventive medicine in order to improve the health of the vulnerable population groups as the women in the reproductive period, the infants, the preschool children, the school children and the youth, the economically active population, the elderly people, the people with disabilities, socially disadvantaged groups, etc. (Election program SDSM 2011, 89). One of the thirteen specific measures predicts providing adequate health care for the women during the pregnancy. This measure is gender specific because it refers only to the needs of the women.

For the first time in their history, SDSM devotes a special part of their election program to the women. This part named “Free and powerful women” is gender sensitive and provides preparation of the Strategy and the Action Plan for the fight against discrimination of the women in the employment relations based on the pregnancy, the maternity leave and the motherhoods. This part also provides legal changes that will lead to increased sanctions for this types of discrimination, intensified and specialized supervision, mandatory informing of the expecting mothers about their rights and free legal assistance to vulnerable groups of women in the disputes which cover this types of discrimination (Election program SDSM 2011, 107). In order to achieve the above mentioned goals, twelve gender specific and gender transformative measures are provided. These measures include the realization of the principal “more than two women in the Government of the Republic of Macedonia”, the implementation of the active measures for the employment of the women over 45 years; simplification of the prompt procedures for maternity leave

payment; providing a safe and dignified childbirth through the reconstruction and the equipping of the existing maternity hospitals in Macedonia; putting at least one oral contraceptive on the positive list of the National health fund; making physical contraceptive cheaper through lower taxation; introducing field gynecological ambulances in the rural communities; providing cheaper or even free abortion in the state hospitals for the women - welfare recipients; reviewing all of the books for primary and secondary school that might promote discrimination, stereotypes or prejudice about the relations between men and women, which is against the values and the norms of the constitution of the Republic of Macedonia; opening new shelter centers for the domestic violence victims; introducing flexible working time for a number of kindergartens (second and third shift) according to the needs of the working parents in the municipalities; formulating measures for increasing commitment and field operations of the relevant social and other services which work with domestic violence victims (Election program SDSM 2011, 107).

After the analysis of the election program of SDSM, for the Parliamentary elections in 2011 we can conclude the following: Certain progress of this party in the gender sensitization is visible, especially when compared to previous elections. Progress can be noticed in the increasing number of the gender sensitive measures and policies, as well as in the introducing of some gender transformative policies, which has never been noticed before. This election program, for the first time presents the position of the party towards women, not just in one particular part of the program, but also through the several measures provided in the other parts of the program.

VMRO-DPMNE

The election program of VMRO – DPMNE for the Parliamentary elections in 2011 is available on line and is consisted of 278 pages, separated in 13 parts. The introductory part of this program refers to the most significant achievements so far, as well as the strategic priorities and the objectives for the forthcoming period. In this part, the President of the party, Nikola Gruevski, addresses the citizens, which makes this part of the program gender neutral. In the first part of the program, VMRO-DPMNE indicates that the strong economy is the basis for everything; therefore the economy is one of the top priorities of this party. Unfortunately, all of the provided measures and policies in this part are gender neutral and they do not highlight the role of the women in the economy. In the part that refers to the business environment and the competitiveness, VMRO-DPMNE emphasizes that they are continuously working on the promotion of the business environment. According to them, “the favorable business environment leads to more investments, more new job vacancies and increase the quality standard of the population” (Election program VMRO-DPMNE 2011,29). The measures provided in this part of the election program are gender neutral because they do not refer to any specific gender. They are not gender sensitive as well, because they do not provide any additional motivations or benefits for the women that want to be included in these new economic flows. The part of the election program named “Investments” highlights the importance of the investments for new job opportunities and rapid economic development. Therefore, “growth the domestic investments and attracting foreign direct investment remain the two key goals for this party” (Election program VMRO-DPMNE 2011, 52). VMRO-DPMNE works on the promotion of the Republic of Macedonia as an investment destination, their plan is to

recruit economic and local promoters who will work on this promotion. Unfortunately, this measure is not gender sensitive because this party does not propose specific stimulations for recruitment of the women promoters. In the part of this program which refers to the equal opportunities for all, VMRO-DPMNE noted that they will take care of the unemployed, the retirees, the social vulnerable groups, the orphans, the single mothers, as well as of all those who remained on the margins of the society due to various reasons (Election program VMRO-DPMNE 2011, 158). The measures and the projects that VMRO-DPMNE predicts in this part are mostly gender neutral. They refer to providing a dignified life for retirees, social partnership, protection of the old and the people in need, protection of the people with disabilities, child care and protection, as well as equal opportunities for all (Election program VMRO-DPMNE 2011, 165). As far as the last measure is concerned, this party includes the welfare recipients, the vulnerable groups, the asylum seekers, but unfortunately does not include the women as separate category.

The abovementioned part of the program, named “The land of equal opportunities for all”, covers the Strategy for Demographic Development of the Republic of Macedonia 2008-2015, where the role of the family as the basis for everything is a highlight. This part proposes “the right to maternity leaves for the fathers or the adoptive parents for the period of one month after the birth, in order to help the mother immediately after the labor, as well as to encourage the equal use of the parental leave for both parents” (Election program VMRO-DPMNE 2011, 165). This gender sensitive measure will lead to gender transformative policy. This part contains another gender sensitive measure named “Equal opportunities” which provides strengthening the fight against all forms of discrimination through the implementation of the Law on prevention and protection against discrimination, as well as the established Commission for Protection against Discrimination (Election program VMRO-DPMNE 2011, 167). “Macedonia, a Country of Knowledge” is the part of the election program that covers the policies of this party for all levels of education. This part provides gender neutral and gender insensitive policies, because they do not provide additional or special benefits for the education and additional qualifications for the women. They also do not take into account the women’s specific needs, possibilities and opportunities, in order to increase their number and their part in the education and the science. The analysis of the program of VMRO-DPMNE for the Parliamentary elections in 2011 shows some regressions in the gender sensitization as opposed to their programs for the previous election cycles. This can be seen in the low number of provided measures and policies which cover the gender issues. The entire focus in this program is on the economy, which disables to estimate the position of this party towards the women. In the election program, the issues that affect the women’s life are intertwined with the other issues, but this is not common practice. A special section dedicated to the women does not exist in this program of VMRO-DPMNE. This program has only one gender transformative policy which refers to the right to parental leave for the father or the adoptive parent and this is absolutely positive. The general conclusion about the election programs for the Parliamentary elections in 2011 is that there is a certain progress in the gender sensitization compared to previous election cycles, but unfortunately there is a certain regress as well. The progress can be noticed in the election program of SDSM, because they provide more gender sensitive measures and policies compared to their previous programs, while in this election program of VMRO-DPMNE, it can be noticed that there is a regression in the provision of gender sensitive policies and measures compared to their previous programs.

However, the fact that for the first time in these election programs SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE offered gender transformative policies should be emphasized. If these policies convert into concrete measures and solutions that will be implemented, the certain gender equality in the Republic of Macedonia will be achieved.

CONCLUSION

After the qualitative analysis of the election programs of SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE at the Parliamentary elections in 1990, 2002 and 2011, we can conclude the following:

At the first independent Parliamentary elections in 1990, both political parties had election programs that are not gender sensitive. In their programs they do not take into consideration the perceptions, the experiences, the knowledge and the interests of the women and the men in order to offer the measures and the policies that would be the best for both genders. These parties usually offer gender neutral policies that do not have the influence on the changing of the gender status quo position in the society.

In 2002, significant gender sensitivity can be noticed in the election programs of SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE. This change is a result of the tendency of the Republic of Macedonia to become an EU member state, which requires a change of the Macedonian legislation and its harmonization with the EU legislation. It should be noted that these changes are not a result of the greater gender sensitivity of the parties or as a result of their changes in the awareness, the attitudes and the priorities. The commitments to the gender equality in these programs are mostly declarative, which can be noticed from the fact that both of the parties look at the gender equality only as an integral part of the fundamental human rights. Therefore, they do not mention the gender equality separately in their programs. SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE mostly offer gender neutral policies and unfortunately they do not recognize the gender specific needs, so for these Parliamentary elections they do not offer any gender transformative policy.

It can be noticed that the election programs of SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE for the Parliamentary elections in 2011 are quite different in terms of gender sensitivity. We can see a positive trend and increased gender sensitive measures and policies in the election program of SDSM when compared to their previous programs, while in the election program of VMRO-DPMNE negative trend in terms of gender sensitivity exist. The progress of the both parties can be seen in their attitudes towards the gender equality issues and the fight against discrimination, as well as in the actualization of the specific issues that affect women. However, according to their election programs, the progress is bigger at SDSM than at VMRO-DPMNE. In 2011, the both parties for the first time offer gender transformative policies, which recognized the gender specific needs and at the same time tended to transform the existing gender relations.

The final conclusion of this paper is that in the period of two decades there is a positive trend of capacity building and awareness raising about gender equality in the both political parties. They started to develop, adopt and implement gender sensitive measures and policies, and that trend should be highlighted and developed in the future by offering more gender transformative policies in the election programs, because this is the only way to achieve full gender equality in the Republic of Macedonia.

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